

Message Text

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PAGE 01 JOHANN 00120 191312Z
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CAPE TOWN ALSO FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PINS, SF
SUBJECT: TRANSVAAL SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

REF: (A) JOHANNESBURG 0042, (B) JOHANNESBURG 0052

1. ATTENDANCE AT TRANSVAAL BLACK PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS IS REPORTED AS UNEVEN, WITH SOME TOWNSHIPS REPORTING NEAR NORMAL ATTENDANCE, WHILE OTHERS, IN PARTICULAR SOWETO SECONDARY SCHOOLS, STILL REPORT BELOW AVERAGE TURNOUTS. IN THE WAKE OF LAST YEAR'S EXTRAORDINARILY SUCCESSFUL BOYCOTT OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS, MUCH ATTENTION HAS BEEN FOCUSED ON WHETHER THE TOWNSHIP SCHOOL SYSTEMS WILL BE ABLE TO ATTRACT STUDENTS BACK INTO THE CLASSROOM FOR THE NEW SCHOOL TERM WHICH COMMENCED YESTERDAY, JANUARY 17. PARTICULARLY IN THE WAKE OF MINISTER OF BANTU EDUCATION M.C. BOTHA'S REFUSAL TO GRANT ANY SIGNIFICANT CONCESSIONS TO PROTESTING STUDENTS AND TEACHERS, THE DEGREE OF ATTENDANCE FOR THE NEW SCHOOL TERM IS SEEN AS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 JOHANN 00120 191312Z

BAROMETER OF CONTINUING POLITICAL PROTEST IN THE TRANSVAAL BLACK TOWN SHIPS.

2. PRETORIA'S TOWNSHIPS, PRINCIPALLY MAMELODI AND ATTERIDGEVILLE, SHOWED SIGNS OF REDUCED, BUT IMPROVING, ATTENDANCE AS STUDENTS FOR THE MOST PART RETURNED TO CLASSES. AS IN SOWETO, ATTENDANCE WAS STRONGEST IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS WITH SOME FALLING OFF AT THE

SECONDARY ACEL. OTHER EAST RAND TOWNSHIPS, SUCH AS TEMBISA, REPORTED NEAR NORMAL ATTENDANCE. SOWETOAN SOUTH AFRICA'S LARGEST BLACK TOWNSHIP, REPORTED A BREAK IN THE PATTERN, HOWEVER, AS SECONDARY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE STILL APPEARS SIGNIFICANTLY BELOW AVERAGE. PRIMARY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE SEEMS TO BE NEARER TO NORMAL (SEVENTY PERCENT) ALTHOUGH TO SOME DEGREE THIS IS TO BE EXPECTED, AS THE BOYCOTT WAS FAR LESS EFFECTIVE AT THIS LEVEL.

3. COMMENT: AS NOTED, SCHOOL ATTENDANCE THROUGHOUT THE WITWATERSRAND HAS LARGELY BEEN SEEN AS A BAROMETER OF POLITICAL TENSION WITHIN THE TOWNSHIPS. MILITANT BLACKS IN THE TOWNSHIPS HAVE MAINTAINED THAT STUDENTS WOULD NOT RETURN TO CLASSES UNLESS MAJOR CHANGES WERE MADE IN THE SYSTEM OF BANTU EDUCATION. HOWEVER, AS NOTED IN REF B, IN SOWETO, AS WELL AS TO A LESSER EXTENT IN OTHER TOWNSHIPS, UNIFIED BLACK RESISTANCE HAS EMERGED IN THE WAKE OF OCTOBER 19 AND THE DISCIPLINE AND ORGANIZATION WHICH CONTRIBUTED TO THE EXTRAORDINARILY SUCCESSFUL BOYCOTTS OF LAST YEAR ARE NOW IN DOUBT. THE FACT THAT SOWETO SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IS STILL BELOW NORMAL IS DUE TO THE FACT THAT SOWETO SECONDARY SCHOOL POPULATION REPRESENTS PERHAPS THE MOST HIGHLY POLITICIZED BLACK STUDENT GROUP (OUTSIDE THE UNIVERSITIES) IN ALL OF SOUTH AFRICA. EVIDENCE HERE SUGGESTS, HOWEVER, THAT EVEN IN SOWETO, SUPPOSED STRONGHOLD OF RESISTANCE, THE WILL TO RESIST THE RETURN TO CLASSES APPEARS TO BE WEAKENING AS BOREDOM, INACTIVITY AND FRUSTRATION HAVE STEADILY ERODED POLITICAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 JOHANN 00120 191312Z

ACTIVISM.
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